THE MORNING CALL

SPORTS

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 1996

De Ferran making the most of chance

With the help of Hall, Goodyear, Reynard and Honda, last year's top rookie is still making an impact.

By PAUL REINHARD
Call Sports Editor

Gil de Ferran says his car owner, Jim Hall, is "straightforward ... he's pretty non-political. You know if you're doing the right thing or the wrong thing."

Obviously, Hall, whose Pennzoil Chaparral chassis in 1979 introduced ground effects to Indy-car racing, is also an astute judge of racing talent. He gave de Ferran, who had never driven in a race in the United States, the seat in his Indy car for 1995.

All de Ferran did in return was win the season-ending race and Rookie of the Year honors in the PPG IndyCar World Series, then turned down the offer of a Formula One ride in order to go forward with Hall.

He has earned points in each of the first four races of the 1996 season, taking second at the opener in Miami and later leading 100 laps at Long Beach, only to have an exhaust hose come loose and cause him to lose power and drop back to fifth.

"What can you do?" he said yesterday during a rain delay in the Bosch Spark Plug Grand Prix schedule. "You have to wake up the next day like nothing happened.

"The moment you start believing you have a curse on you, you become lazy. Then your destiny is out of your hands. We're doing the right things; we just have to keep doing it."

The hot package in Indy car racing early this season is the Reynard chassis, Honda engine and Firestone tires. De Ferran has two of the three, and it was obvious by his performance at Long Beach that the Goodyear tire people are putting every effort into escalation of the tire war.

"After Australia, when it was clear we had a performance disadvantage, Goodyear went to work," de Ferran said. "We had a pretty even tire for the race at Long Beach, and it seems to be good here, too."

De Ferran was not among the fastest drivers in yesterday's practice, but cars with Goodyear tires did dominate.

Pennzoil Hall Racing used the Mercedes engine last year, and de Ferran was 18th on the starting grid for the Bosch Grand Prix. He smacked the wall on the 184th lap and placed 19th.

"That wasn't fun," he said when someone reminded him of the crash yesterday. "I forgot completely about it you told me. That was the first time I hit a wall on an oval."

Although his entire career was in road racing and he was on a course with Formula One at the end of it, de Ferran said he enjoys the short ovals of IndyCar because of their action-packed racing.

He wasn't so positive the first time, however. In fact, you might say his head was spinning.

The hot package in Indy car racing early this season is the Reynard chassis, Honda engine and Firestone tires. De Ferran has two of the three, and it was obvious by his performance at Long Beach that the Goodyear tire people are putting every effort into escalation of the tire war.

"My first test was at Phoenix, and I had to get out of the car," de Ferran said. "When I did, I had to hold on to the cockpit. It took a couple of tests to get my balance right."

His balance is just fine now, though. In fact, everything about his driving style is fine.

If any driver is due, it's Gil de Ferran.

▲

The Nazareth Speedway doesn't have a bump or a ripple that Paul Tracy doesn't know about, but the 27-year-old Canadian has yet to translate that knowledge into a pole-winning run.

Tracy gave indication yesterday that things could be changing when he turned in the fastest lap of the Bosch Spark Plug Grand Prix practice session on the 1-mile tri-oval.

In the overall scheme of things, the day

Please See **NAZARETH** Page **A76** ▶

2048204822

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/yfcn0004

NAZARETH

►Continued From Page A66

was no big deal. Nothing will be official until the cars make qualification runs at 1 p.m. today.

But in the war for control in the competitive PPG Indy Car World Series, even small battles are significant.

So yesterday was a kind of "Goodyear's Revenge" as cars equipped with Goodyear tires grabbed the top five spots on the speed chart.

At the same time, the session proved to be a reassertion of power by the two teams that, until recently, have been considered the dominant forces in the series.

The Marlboro Team Penske cars, driven by Tracy and Al Unser Jr., were first and fifth, and the Hogan Penske Racing car driven by Emerson Fittipaldi was second. All three are Penske chasses.

The third- and fourth-fastest speeds went to the Newman-Haas team drivers Michael Andretti and Christian Fittipaldi both with Lola chasses.

Tracy, who began his Indy car career as Roger Penske's test driver and who put on thousands of those miles on Penske's Nazareth track, was clocked at 19.306 seconds (188.474 miles per hour) in the first two practice sessions.

He could not improve in the second session after heavy rain cleaned most of the rubber from the track.

The Indy cars have less downforce under the 1996 rules than they had a year ago, and Tracy said he thought it would be tough to break the qualifying mark of 187.441 mph set last year by Robby Gordon. But he's not dismissing the possibility entirely.

Emerson Fittipaldi, a three-time winner of the Bosch Grand Prix, was clocked at 19.685 (182.885); Andretti was at 19.870 (181.173); Christian Fittipaldi had 19.899 (180.916) and Unser Jr. was at 19.931 (180.620).

Jimmy Vasser, winner of three races this year, was the fastest of the drivers on Firestone tires, turning a lap of 19.968 (180.290) for sixth place.

The only incident of the day occurred in the second session when rookie Alex Zanardi's Target Reynard spun in the third turn. The rear end contacted the wall. Zanardi was not hurt, and a decision on the car will be made overnight.

PIT NOTES — Marlboro Racing was announced yesterday as the 16th sponsor of the U.S. 500, the IndyCar event that will run in Michigan on the same day as the Indianapolis 500. Marlboro also will put up $100,000 for the pole winner at the event . . . Two other announcements were made concerning the U.S. 500. FanFare, an autograph session featuring all the drivers in the series, will be held on Sunday, May 12; and a 20x30-foot television screen will be placed in the Turn 4 area at MIS to give spectators in those stands a view of what is taking place in the pit area.

Morning Call Sports Page

Morning Call Sports Editor Paul Reinhard and John Elliott will set the stage for the Bosch Spark Plug Grand Prix at Nazareth Speedway on tomorrow's Morning Call Sports Page radio show, heard from 9 a.m. to noon on WAEB-AM 790.

Reinhard and Elliott will report live from the track on the show, broadcast again from Woody's at 12th and Liberty Streets in Allentown.

Other scheduled guests include Kutztown University and former Whitehall High softball star Lorie Erie; Debbie Whitesell of Mulligan's Golf Center in Whitehall; and Jim Krupka with the Hampton Lanes/Drilling Station Bowling Report.

Also included will be an update on the Patriot League softball tournament taking place at Pate's Park this weekend.

Other segments feature the Top Hat Formalwear softball and Hitter's Edge baseball polls as well as the Frantz Trophies Players of the Week.

To participate, call 720-7900.

2048204823

Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/yfcn0004